


Political integration and disintegration of Central Europe: a historical perspective

Evening conference

25 January 2024

17:00 - 18:30



Mrs Caroline DE GRUYTER, *journalist and columnist*

Dear Madam, Sir,

We are pleased to invite you to an **evening conference** organised on **Thursday 25 January 2024** from **17:00 until 18:30** by the **Royal Higher Institute for Defence**.

The run-up to the European Summit in December 2023 again underlined the paralysing effect of the Member States' right of veto on the EU's foreign and security policy: one country obstinately refuses to validate near-unanimous support for concretising Ukraine's EU membership. At the same time, the EU is often criticised for a supposed lack of legitimacy. However, moving to qualified majority voting in security and defence matters would almost certainly fan the flames of Euroscepticism even further. The EU thus faces a precarious balancing act between ineffectiveness and accusation of illegitimacy.

To explore ways out of this dilemma, it can be useful to go back in time. Indeed, the EU is not the first political actor in Europe to have experienced this problem. For centuries, the Habsburgs governed a vast patchwork of lands and citizens with very different cultures and expectations. Both the EU's approach to governance and our current geopolitical situation seem very similar to those of the Habsburgs.

Does the EU need to make a choice between exerting the prerogatives of a great power and maintaining the democratic system that accommodates its 27 Member States? How do we make sense of resurgent nationalist tendencies in the EU? What explains Hungary's challenging posture? By finding out what the Habsburgs did right and what they did wrong, we might develop institutions able to better respond to contemporary challenges – or at least, it could help us frame certain challenges in Central European political history. In order to answer these questions, we have the pleasure to welcome Ms Caroline DE GRUYTER, correspondent, author and columnist expert on subjects related to Europe.

This conference will take place **in English** on **Thursday 25 January 2024 at 17:00 in the conference room at campus Renaissance** (entrance: **rue Hobbema 8/Hobbemastraat 8, 1000 Brussels**). A simultaneous interpretation in Dutch and French will be provided in the conference room. It will not be possible to follow the conference online. However, subject to the consent of the speaker, a recording of her presentation will be made available afterwards on our website.

We thank you in advance for registering via the following link: www.defence-institute.be. **Registration by Monday 22 January 2024 at the latest is compulsory.**

(Signed)

Filip BORREMANS, MSc Eng
Air Force Major General
Director-General
Royal Higher Institute for Defence

Programme:

16:30	Welcome
17:00	Conference and Q&A
18:30 – 19:30	Reception